



Adam C. Brown House



One of the Oldest Structures in Washington State

One of the oldest structures on San Juan Island and northwest Washington will soon return to its first island location—Officers' Row at American Camp, a unit of San Juan Island National Historical Park. The Adam C. Brown house, an 1856 vintage, box-frame building at the corner of West and First streets in downtown Friday Harbor, is scheduled to be moved to American Camp by Nickel Brothers House Moving in December 2010. It will be relocated directly adjacent to the existing officers' quarters, which remained in use on the site as a farmhouse.

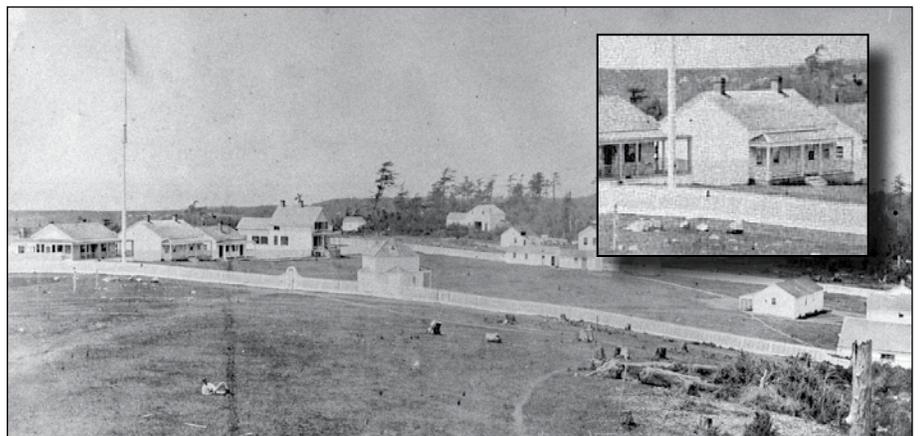
Both buildings originated as officers quarters at Fort Bellingham (see drawing on reverse), which was established in August 1856 by Capt. George E. Pickett on Bellingham Bay to protect settlers from Indians raiding from today's British Columbia and southeast Alaska. The fort was abandoned and dismantled en masse from 1859-1867 and moved to San Juan Island to house the army during the joint military occupation by Great Britain and the United States.

From West Street to American Camp

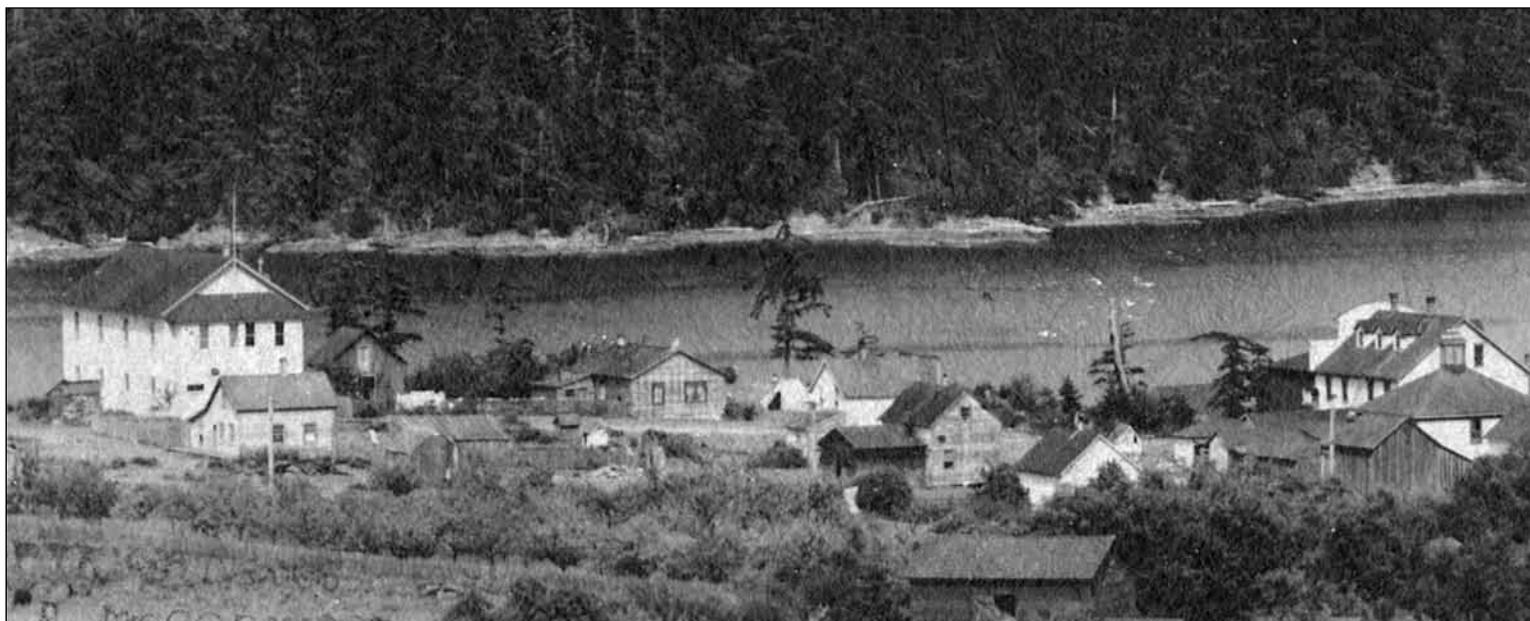
Ownership of the house will be transferred to the National Park Service by owners of the Friday Harbor House hotel. Park maintenance crews have been preparing the house for transfer. This includes demolishing the shed-style addition on First Street, which was added to the building in the 1980s. The move is scheduled from 3 to 7 p.m., and will be routed through downtown Friday Harbor as follows: First Street, Court Street, Spring Street, Argyle Avenue, Cattle Point Road, and American Camp.

American Camp 1868

Island lore has long identified the Brown house as an American Camp artifact. Three years after the joint military occupation concluded in November 1872, the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps auctioned the buildings at American and English camps. Several of these buildings that were moved off site have been identified over the years, and two—the Laundress Quarters at American Camp and the Hospital at English Camp—were returned to their original sites. The house first appears on city plats in 1885. County records show varying uses over the years, including a blacksmith shop, retail sales and a private residence. The park commissioned an investigation of the building's pedigree in 1987, but the report failed to provide documentation of the bill of sale at the time of auction, nor any written record of its transport to the current site. Further research in 2005 revealed a February 1876 Treasury department receipt for \$1,896 total for all buildings sold, but no individual bills of sales are known to exist.



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The Brown house stands left center in this 1890s view of Friday Harbor, with Brown Island in the background. The Odd Fellows Hall, today's Whale Museum, is the two-story structure at far left. The Tourist Hotel, today's Bird Rock Inn, is at far right.

Brown House Pedigree

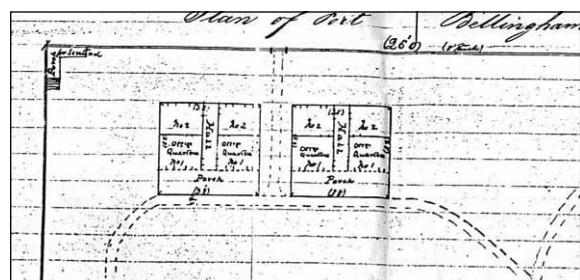
An earlier inspection by NPS architectural historians indicated that the building could have been erected in the 1860s. The original portion of the house also matches the written descriptions and dimensions of the building shown in U.S. Army inspection reports and footprint dimensions of a military structure at Fort Bellingham and the officers' quarters building at American Camp.

The Brown building is a rare vertical plank, box frame, wood lumber building. It is an unusually large example of the type, more sturdily built than is typical. This factor as well as paint and tool mark evidence strongly suggested that it was built for military purposes.

Lumber Milled on Whatcom Creek, Bellingham Bay

These conjectures were confirmed in 2007 in an assessment conducted by Michael Sullivan of Artifacts Architectural Consulting, Inc. Sullivan not only confirmed that the house matches the box-frame architecture of the period, but that the original boards bear saw blade patterns that could only have come from the Roeder Mill in Whatcom (now Bellingham).

Nearly all the dimension lumber used to build Fort Bellingham in 1856-1857—and the Pickett House, which still stands in downtown Bellingham—came from the Roeder Mill. The first sawmill in Friday Harbor wasn't established until 1894. The Roeder Mill burned to the ground in 1873, the year Friday Harbor was founded. The American Camp structures were not auctioned until 1875.



The saw patterns on planks used in the construction of the Brown house are virtually identical to lumber used to build George Pickett's house (above left), still standing in downtown Bellingham. The above image showing the Brown house (center left) was taken from the roof of the new county courthouse in 1906.